

Laziness or Rest?

Notes from discussions with Khun Sujin in Bangkok, 1979

I asked what laziness was as we have various ideas in a conventional sense about what laziness is. Khun Sujin answered that it is "the postponement of being aware and studying realities. In the absolute sense it must relate to the development of satipatthana. One has a 'rest' and there can be satipatthana. Thinking there can be no awareness when one rests is not helpful. Each moment is conditioned, it doesn't matter whether it is 'resting' and as long as satipatthana arises it isn't being lazy. 'Rest' doesn't mean there is no development of satipatthana. One should consider whether one should 'rest' or not. It's self again, it's not sati which arises by conditions (if one makes rules). Each moment must be known as it arises. Right understanding understands any reality which awareness can be aware of. Who knows what will be seen and heard in heaven but sati can be aware immediately and right understanding can see it as not self."

If someone is 'resting', "who knows whether that person is experiencing directly what object?" I asked about sloth and torpor. "One knows it and can be aware, otherwise it's just thinking. We can only know its characteristic at the moment that it arises. This is the meaning of developing awareness and right understanding of it. Not just one characteristic to be known."

Awareness is with "no force or control". "It's useless to think about a certain situation, because the moment of thinking is not the moment of direct awareness. Awareness will be aware and panna will begin to study and be aware. What about this situation now? This moment is most important. Laziness is thinking of another situation....lazy to develop satipatthana.

The real rest or relaxation is the moment or resting with right understanding. "It's not a matter of stopping thoughts but understanding that one thinks like that by conditions. Satipatthana is the moment of relaxing by understanding it's conditioned like that. Each moment is conditioned by sankhara khandha. It has to be like that because one has accumulations for thinking like that. One will cling less to thinking by understanding more. Don't cling to thinking of even tomorrow. Be aware by understanding it's not self who understands. Each object shouldn't be the object of clinging. Don't be attached to some method, it's not the way of understanding reality....If sati is aware, one doesn't think of whether 'I am lazy'."

"When one is thinking of environment, one forgets to be aware...The purpose is to be aware instantly, that's all." Khun Sujin stressed that the value of being awake is that it's an opportunity to develop awareness, so if one wakes in the night there can be sati instead of aversion because one has woken. If one lies down to rest, it happens by conditions, and she pointed out that even if there is a 'hazy' feeling that this is real and can be known. In one of the discussions at Wat Bhowan we discussed the Sutta on 'Nodding':

"Noddest thou, Moggallāna, dozest thou, Moggallāna?

If while abiding thoughtful comes the thought 'that drowsiness has descended' - take no heed of it...."

The Buddha goes on to suggest other possibilities such as 'ponder in thy heart on Dhamma, explore it and maybe that drowsiness will pass', repeat Dhamma, or maybe you will pull both ear-lobes, cleanse the eyes with water, apply the mind to the thought of light, apply thy thought on the alley-walk or finally lie down.

Gradual Sayings, Bk. of 7s, para. VIII

It's easy to read this Sutta and consider these possibilities as some list in order of priority to be followed out. However, Khun Sujin

pointed out how it has to be read in the light of satipatthana. It's not a list of rules, but various possibilities which may happen, and whether one pulls both ear-lobes or lies down what is important is not the situation but the developing of sati which Venerable Moggallana would have understood without having to be told.

It's very easy to follow or just to repeat the words. People often repeat the Satipatthana Sutta which talks about developing clear understanding. "But how and when can there be clear comprehension? Through what doorway? What is the characteristic of kaya? They don't want real understanding...People don't have anything to study and just follow the words." Khun Sujin also talks about how one clings to "concentration as a stepping stone...It's very difficult to eliminate because it's wrong view with clinging. The teaching is there but they take it and mix it. It's more dangerous when one consults the book and mixes. You will take it for yourself. One will see with satipatthana that sati is so natural that one doesn't have to do anything extra at all. One has to be so honest and sincere in order to advance."

"It's not the matter of doing, it's the matter of understanding this moment. It's conditioned view, it's natural and one can see, but when one has kilesa one cannot see because one thinks...if there is no careful study, one will keep on with wrong view."